

EXHIBIT

16



Alaska Head Start Association

PO Box 202449 | Anchorage AK 99520-2449

www.akheadstart.org | akheadstart@gmail.com

April 3, 2025

The Honorable Alaska Federal Delegation
Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Representative Begich
U.S. House and U.S. Senate

Dear Alaska Federal Delegation,

We, the Alaska Head Start Association, write to you with deep concern regarding the recent and abrupt closure of the Region 10 Office of Head Start in Seattle, which occurred on the morning of April 1, 2025. Alongside this closure, eight dedicated federal employees, whose work directly supported over 70 Head Start programs in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, have been placed on leave of absence. This move has created immediate and serious concerns about the continued success and sustainability of Head Start services across our region, and we urgently seek your support to address the situation.

The Region 10 Office of Head Start has been a critical resource in ensuring the compliance and effectiveness of Head Start programs. This lean but efficient team provided oversight, regulatory guidance, and technical assistance to local programs, enabling them to operate in compliance with federal laws and regulations while ensuring that children and families received the highest possible quality of services. Their commitment has been integral in helping to recruit and retain high-quality staff, as well as navigating the unique challenges faced by communities in Alaska and other rural areas.

The closure of Region 10 is part of a larger effort to reduce federal staff, which has already resulted in the shuttering of regional offices in other parts of the country, including San Francisco, Boston, New York, and Chicago. In total, this decision has impacted Head Start programs across 23 states, leaving grantees without the support they depend on to continue providing essential services to vulnerable children and families. The lack of clear communication or transition plans exacerbates the uncertainty and challenges faced by local programs, many of which are already in the process of submitting critical federal grant applications that ensure continuity of services for the coming year.

Two key examples illustrate the immediate and profound impact of this closure:

1. **Federal Reporting:** Head Start programs are legally required to report specific events to the federal government, such as incidents that may impact child safety. With the closure of the regional offices, there is currently no federal contact for programs to notify of such events, leaving vulnerable children and families at risk.

Alaska Head Start Association

Represented by Grantee Agency Directors, Staff, Parents, and Friends of Head Start in communities throughout Alaska

Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association ~ Association of Village Council Presidents ~ Bristol Bay Native Association
Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes ~ Chugachmiut ~ CCS Early Learning ~ Clare Swan EHS/CCP
Cook Inlet Native Head Start ~ Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments ~ Fairbanks Native Association ~ Kawerak
Kenaitze Indian Tribe ~ Kids' Corps Inc. ~ Metlakatla Indian Community ~ Thrivalaska ~ RurAL CAP ~ Tanana Chiefs Conference



Alaska Head Start Association

PO Box 202449 | Anchorage AK 99520-2449

www.akheadstart.org | akheadstart@gmail.com

2. **Grant Applications and Approval:** Head Start grantees are in the process of preparing their annual federal grant applications. These applications are vital for securing funding and ensuring continued services. Without federal staff to guide this process, grantees are left in limbo, unsure of where to submit their applications or who will review and approve them. This delay threatens the timely disbursement of funds, putting critical services at risk.

The Region 10 Office has been instrumental in ensuring programs are compliant, accountable, and able to effectively serve their communities. The loss of this office's expertise and support will disrupt services in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, severely impacting the children and families who rely on these programs.

We urge you to take immediate action to reverse this decision and reinstate staff to the regional offices, particularly the Region 10 Office in Seattle. The Administration's cuts to the federal workforce should not come at the expense of the well-being of children and families who depend on Head Start services. We also request that you call for a clear, coordinated plan to ensure that Head Start programs are able to continue their work without further disruption.

We ask that you speak out and advocate for Head Start programs in your state, urging your colleagues in Congress to demand the reinstatement of federal staff and the reopening of regional offices. Please join us in protecting the future of these vital services for our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your support in ensuring that Head Start programs across our region can continue to thrive and meet the needs of our children and families.

Sincerely,

Deborah Trowbridge
President
Alaska Head Start Association
akheadstart@gmail.com

Alaska Head Start Association

Represented by Grantee Agency Directors, Staff, Parents, and Friends of Head Start in communities throughout Alaska

Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association ~ Association of Village Council Presidents ~ Bristol Bay Native Association
Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes ~ Chugachmiut ~ CCS Early Learning ~ Clare Swan EHS/CCP
Cook Inlet Native Head Start ~ Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments ~ Fairbanks Native Association ~ Kawerak
Kenaitze Indian Tribe ~ Kids' Corps Inc. ~ Metlakatla Indian Community ~ Thrivalaska ~ RurAL CAP ~ Tanana Chiefs Conference

Questions, Concerns, and Comments from Alaskan Head Start Directors on the Closure of HHS Regional Offices

Questions:

- How will the workload of my Region 11 Program Specialist affect her responsiveness to my program questions/submissions if she becomes responsible for additional programs?
- Our program currently has zero federal support - point of contact - oversight. Who do we work with on the day-to-day business of providing services, resolving concerns, solving problems, and being in compliance? (going on two days now). God forbid an emergency occurs or something that we are mandated to report... who/how?? Will we be out of compliance because we can't report? Will continued services/funding be in jeopardy?
- Who do we go to for guidance? Any Approvals such as equipment and grants? Questions? Does this affect us getting a Federal Focus Area 2 Review?
- Will we be able to draw funds down from PMS without region approval?
- Who do we reach out with for questions on funding or grant applications?
- What will the next cuts be from the government?
- We have absolutely zero idea what interruptions this will cause. Does our request to access federal funds to make payroll or pay the utility or food bill require someone who is now laid off to approve it? When we report our monthly enrollment - who will now review that and see that we are in compliance? So many details are unknown.
- Region X staff have specific understanding of our unique programs. They have been to our sites and walked in our shoes. They understand the needs that my remote Alaskan programs have. We are losing huge amounts of specific expertise with this cut.
- Is the state prepared to take over the slots that could be lost across the state?
- I am an 11/01 grantee and wondering if there will be a delay on the balance of funds? The 2nd half of my grant for FY25.
- Is there a 1-800 head start number we can call
- Is there a plan?
- What is the plan for the future for Region 10? 90 days, 6months, 12 months?
- What is the current and long-term plan for Head Start?

Concerns:

- With the closing of 5 Regional HHS offices, this consolidation will put pressure on the other Regional Offices and slow/bog down ALL Head Start grant actions across the country. Our grant renews May 1, 2025 and we have not received a Notice of Award for our next grant year yet and I am concerned that we may not before our refunding date. We have heard through national associations that grant actions are currently "sitting in upper HHS waiting for signature."

April 3, 2025

- I'm concerned that my slot reduction request that I submit this April, will not be closed by the time I need to submit my new 5-year grant application on 10/1/25. I am concerned that my under enrollment status in the OHS might result in reduced funding even though we have submitted a reduction request with justification to receive the same amount of funding.
- Our federal grant application is due on May 1. We are thick in the writing. Normally, we discuss details of this application with our federal program specialist (which is much more effective than after the fact). We have no program specialist. We don't know if we will be able to submit our application. We don't know who it will go to. We assume that if it goes to someone... they will have ZERO knowledge/context/awareness of our program (strengths, weaknesses, performance, history, compliance, reputation, etc) AND they will know nothing about Alaska-specific issues. This is a recipe for disaster.
- Who will approve Change of Scope Applications, funding applications, teacher waivers, enrollment reports? These have real impacts on our ability to provide services and stay in compliance.
- Does this mean that T/TA is also going away? How do new Directors get the guidance they need?
- We are concerned that region 11 is next. Our T/TA is planning a trip to our site and I'm worried that she won't be able to come.
- My program receives fiscal guidance, training and reporting support from Region X staff. Who will be able to answer my questions now? Without a plan in place I have nobody to call.
- Staff are worried that their jobs will be going away, some have started looking for other employment. How do we encourage staff to stay without any guarantee from the feds of continued funding?
- How does this action impact federal monitoring? Programs are right now expecting to have oversight visits/processes occur. Are these things still going to happen? Programs have scheduled around them... we have no idea.
- I'm concerned that all funding for Head Start may disappear over the next four years.
- Really concerned about the NOA for the balance of funds. That's my main concern. My other concern is the potential for delays in grants processing and notices of awards. Also programs needing immediate support and guidance with questions.
- How were regions selected to be closed? Is this temporary?
- What are programs going to do when they have a grant application that is due? This will be a trickle down effect that could close programs.
- How can we further expect the priorities of the current administration to affect the families that we serve and our own employment.
- Is there a plan?

April 3, 2025

It blows my mind that...

- It blows my mind that these Regional Offices, that support high-quality comprehensive Head Start services, can be closed and "consolidated" with NO PLAN and NO COMMUNICATION TO GRANT RECIPIENTS.
- That a transition plan was not shared so all programs know who their OHS contact person is, nor that programs have not heard anything from the OHS on it yet.
- That there has been zero communication from the federal government about this. If there was a plan/is a plan - we don't know what it is. No notice. No guidance. No direction. No leadership. No support. No communication. No plan.
- We came to work to learn this news, with zero guidance on who we go to now.
- Support teams were removed without a plan. We need to report health concerns, emergencies and receive guidance. We have been cut off from all support without any communication or guidance.
- That people like Paul Noski with decades of experience were just fired and not even allowed to pick up their personal belongings.
- That there was no notice or transparent plan shared
- It blows my mind that we our neighbor region is being affected and we might be next.
- That the Trump Administration can make such a rash decision that affects children and families that need Head Start programs
- That these decisions can be made without thoughtful and respectful public discourse?

What if scenario:

- What if NOAs are not awarded before new grant years begin. I'm concerned programs may not be able to resume services without funds, which would result in staff leaving programs and making it extremely difficult to resume programs when funds are available later.
- What if they plan to consolidate regional Head Start offices? This should all have been done first before just closing doors and leaving all of the grantees without any form of guidance?
- There is an emergency such as a health incident or active supervision situation? Who do I contact?
- We can't draw down funding? Do we close classrooms early and lay staff off even though we're months from the summer break?
- What if programs are in DRS? What will consolidation look like? It was already taking a really long time to process grants. Now what will that look like?
- What if we can't get ahold of our Regional office and our 2 projects are pushed even further than planned to be completed?
- The region 10 office is permanently closed. What does that mean for Region 10 grants and grantees.

April 3, 2025

Programs, kids, and families need _____ from the Federal Government:

- consistency, support, communication, and support to their Head Start grant recipient to provide high-quality comprehensive Head Start services.
- Consistency. Respect. Services. Communication. Timelines.
- STABILITY. 40% of the children enrolled in our program are either HOMELESS or they are in FOSTER CARE. These are children who at no fault of their own, have experienced huge early childhood challenges and trauma. This action is thoughtless and callous and has immediate impacts on programs in Alaska that are doing the very hard work to assist these children and families to overcome and get onto a pathway of success.
- COMMUNICATION
- Stability and support. People need to know the program they depend on to provide high-quality services to their child while they go to work and contribute to the economy will continue to be supported. Uncertainty is a waste of time, energy, and resources.
- Stability & support
- Stability
- Consistency and certainty; especially the kids that are in foster care.
- Answers and support

Lack of communication causes _____

- Chaos, panic, anxiety and much-needed, valuable services to children and families are jeopardized.
- Fear. Anxiety. Resignations. Doubt. Lack of productivity. Worry.
- Panic. Extra work. Head Start is finally starting to emerge from the largest most difficult workforce crisis we have ever experienced. The federal government causing all these dedicated LOCAL champions who care for children, or cook the meals, or drive the buses or provide janitorial service to question whether they should look for another job (especially when they are already so poorly compensated) is the definition of UN-HELPFUL and DESTRUCTIVE. Children and families not supported now... will cost us much more later. The federal government should be FIGHTING FOR these children and families!
- Anxiety, animosity, anger
- Unnecessary worry for staff and families. We are supporting a population that may not have the luxury of a backup plan. Center closures affect their lives and their bank accounts today. Without regional support, programs will not be able to continue to provide the quality services to families.
- confusion, fear, frustration
- chaos and distrust
- Worry, anxiety, and doubt
- confusion and worry

April 3, 2025

- Higher turnover and extra stress that is not welcome for an already stressed field. Higher turnover and extra stress that is not welcome for an already stressed field.

OK... If you have more... pile them here:

- This hack-and-slash approach is certainly causing more harm than good. Staff are worried, parents are worried, and this all trickles down to the kids. People can't go to work without reliable childcare...
- Without the support of people who know both the federal requirements and the Alaskan context, Alaskan programs are at risk of losing funding and services to families. We need the support of the region team to answer questions and provide essential guidance that helps us to maintain our grants.
- How will this action impact the federal contracts in place with T/TA - which we rely on for training our brand new workforce? Are these federal contracts still in place? Are they overseen by the Regional staff now? Will they be renewed? Are these training resources still available to us?
- How long do we have to wait out the support of early childhood education/childcare? What will it take to rebuild early childhood education/childcare after 4 years? What can we do to turn this situation into something better? How do we not give up but strategically plan for the future?
- Is there a timeline as to when we can know answers to questions?